

## NIFA in the News – Week of December 10, 2012

Curious as to what happens to all the news releases you see in the [NIFA newsroom](#)? Here's the weekly summary of NIFA's mentions in the news media for the week of December 10, 2012.

### In the News

**ASA, CSSA and SSSA Applaud PCAST for Agricultural Research Enterprise Report (Newswise 12/7).** Today the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) released a new report on Agricultural Preparedness and the Agriculture Research Enterprise. The report represents an important analysis of the public and private agricultural research structure and current levels of investment. The report recommends increasing federal support for agriculture research by \$700 million a year; specifically PCAST recommends increasing National Science Foundation funding for basic research relevant to agriculture from \$120 million to \$250 million in fiscal year 2014, and raising the current level of funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) to \$500 million. AFRI is the USDA's premier agricultural competitive grants program. [Link](#)

**State releases beetles to control invasive species (Rutland Herald 12/07).** Unlike the Asian adelgid, the beetles are native to the United States. The beetles released on Thursday were raised in a laboratory at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, but their ancestors came from Idaho. The state obtained all necessary permits and contacted local landowners so they would be aware of the project before Thursday's release, Esden said. The adelgid management project was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and also involves Maine and New Hampshire. [Link](#)

**Bacteria study to be done (AP/KTIC 12/08).** Ten months after the University of Nebraska-Lincoln learned of its \$25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a project involving 11 institutions to study toxic bacteria in beef is under way. Project leader Rod Moxley, a veterinarian and UNL pathologist, says a research team of 49 scientists will be studying a Shiga toxin-producing strain of E. coli. Moxley says that bacterium is different and harder to track than the strain most often reported. It was Shiga contamination of bean sprouts that sickened thousands of people and caused dozens of deaths in Europe last year. [Link](#)

**Presidential council recommends more ag research funding (Agri-Pulse 12/09).** A report from the Presidential Council on Science and Technology (PCAST) released Friday concluded that the federal government needs to increase agricultural research investments by \$700 million per year and adjust USDA's research portfolio so that

external funding is increased. In response to the announcement, American Meat Institute (AMI) Foundation President James H. Hodges said, “We are gratified that PCAST has recognized the essential nature of agriculture science and technology investments. If we are to stay competitive and meet future challenges, we simply must follow through on PCAST’s recommendation to increase research funding.” [Link](#)

**Team helps crack wheat's DNA code (Sacramento Bee 12/09).** A key part of a complex genetic puzzle that has vexed scientists for years is now solved, with the announcement by researchers at UC Davis and the U.S. Department of Agriculture that the sequencing of the wheat genome is now complete. The sequencing results, published in the journal Nature, are expected to have a profound effect on the growing of wheat – the world's most important food crop. "This is a major stepping stone," said Olin Anderson, co-author of the Nature paper and researcher of genomics and gene discovery at the USDA, which participated in the sequencing with eight other institutions. [Link](#)

**White House science advisors stress ag research investments (DTN/Progressive Farmer 12/09).** The country's agricultural research "is not prepared to meet the challenges that U.S. agriculture faces in the 21st century," according to a new report released Friday by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Continued investment is needed for agriculture to keep its competitive advantage, the administration report stated. [Link](#)

**From grapes to bats, MSU faculty members receive grants (Springfield News-Leader 12/10).** Four Missouri State University staff members recently received grants, including two professors at the William H. Darr School of Agriculture who were awarded \$274,519 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in partnership with Truman State University. Chin-Feng Hwang, associate professor, and Wenping Qiu, research professor, will initiate a project entitled “Building Research and Education Capacities to Strengthen the Grape Breeding Program and Expand the Plant Science Curriculum.” The goal is to build a collaborative program between MSU and Truman State University that will lay a foundation for the Norton-based grape breeding program. The initiative will address the skilled workforce shortage for the American grape and wine industry by providing graduates with hands-on experience in the laboratory and in the vineyard. [Link](#)

**Study examines value of ag research, U.S. declared leader (Cattle Network 12/10).** The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) today presented a report on the importance of USDA’s leadership in agricultural research. The Council is a diverse group of individuals appointed by the President from across the basic and applied scientific community to advise the President and the Executive Office of the President on key scientific issues. Report to the President on Agricultural Preparedness & the Agriculture Research Enterprise, by the Council, concludes that the United States is the undisputed world leader in agricultural production today, but also cautions that U.S. agriculture also faces a number of challenges that are poised to become much more serious in the years ahead. There is

no question that the report recognizes American agriculture and USDA's leadership in agricultural science and research as critical to the efforts to ensure greater food security and a better future for everyone. [Link](#)

**U.S.D.A. awards grants to study common bean (Baking Business 12/10).** The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded five grants totaling \$4.5 million in support of research to improve the production of the common bean, a main staple produced throughout food insecure areas of the world, including East and Southern Africa. The awards were made by the U.S.D.A.'s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (N.I.F.A.) in coordination with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID provided the funds for the grants. [Link](#)

**Pecan nutrition: Research project aims at health benefits (Western Farm Press 12/10).** New Mexico State University celebrated two researchers at a Research Rally who are part of a team receiving a \$2.4 million collaborative grant to help pecan growers in the state - and across the U.S. pecan-growing belt - stay competitive in the market focusing on the nutritional benefits of the nut crop. Richard Heerema, a specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service; and Jay Lillywhite, a professor with the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business, received the four-year grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Research Initiative Program. The University of Georgia is the lead on the project, with partners at Texas A&M. [Link](#)

**Colorado State University Announces December Commencement Ceremonies on Dec. 14 and 15 (Equities.com 12/11).** Colorado State University will confer degrees on fall 2012 graduates at commencement ceremonies Dec. 14 and 15. Sonny Ramaswamy, director of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, will speak at the College of Agricultural Sciences commencement ceremony at 12:30 p.m. Dec. 15 in the Lory Student Center Main Ballroom. As part of USDA's Research, Education, and Extension mission, Ramaswamy oversees NIFA awards funds for a wide range of extramural research, education and extension projects that address the needs of farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers. Prior to joining NIFA, Ramaswamy served as dean of Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and director of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station. [Link](#)

**Plant cell biology research center celebrates decade (Press Enterprise 12/11).** When the Center for Plant Cell Biology was launched at UC Riverside in 2002, it was home to 10 faculty members from three departments on campus. Ten years later, the center's membership has grown to 43 scientists from 13 UCR departments, and its reputation has soared, firmly establishing it as one of the world's top centers devoted to the study of plant cell biology. In the past 10 years, the center achieved several milestones. Among them: A highly competitive \$9 million five-year grant to Howard Judelson in 2011 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture to research late blight. [Link](#)

**Pig genome offers insights into the feistiest of farm animals (Farm and Ranch Guide 12/11).** A new genomic analysis reveals some new, unexpected and potentially beneficial similarities between pigs and humans, along with a few distinct differences. The International Swine Genome Sequencing Consortium – led by researchers at the University of Illinois, Wageningen University in the Netherlands and the University of Edinburgh – conducted the analysis. “This new analysis helps us understand the genetic mechanisms that enable high-quality pork production, feed efficiency and resistance to disease,” said Sonny Ramaswamy, the director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. “This knowledge can ultimately help producers breed high-quality swine, lower production costs and improve sustainability.” [Link](#)

**Public Research For Private Interests (KCUR 12/11).** Agricultural colleges in the top five beef-producing states have become quasi-arms of the cattle industry, selling science to corporate bidders who set the research agenda with their dollars. In the 150 years since they were created by President Abraham Lincoln as the “peoples’ universities,” public colleges in Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Colorado are now often focused on work for the big corporations and commodity groups that make up the industrialized beef industry in the U.S. Of the \$71.2 million spent on beef studies at these five colleges during the last five years, 30.5 percent was paid for by private corporations -- the majority by pharmaceutical companies and the National Beef Cattlemen’s Association, a review of public records shows. [Link](#)

**Scientists discuss detection of disease pathogens in food supply (AgriNews 12/13).** Detecting the source of Salmonella on chicken farms may feel to food safety specialists like unscrambling eggs, but in reality, it’s an ongoing effort. Xian-Ming Shi is the director of the Ministry of Science and Technology-U.S. Department of Agriculture Joint Research Center for Food Safety. He, along with a group of visitors from China’s Ministry of Science and Technology, recently attended Purdue University to participate in a food safety forum with professors at the Purdue Center for Food Safety and Engineering, a hotbed of some of the latest technology used to more quickly and intelligently detect diseases that affect agricultural products and sometimes lead to breeches in food safety and even disease outbreaks in food. A U.S. Department of Agriculture and a National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant will allow Purdue scientists to use an RNA rapid detection system to test dairy products for rapid detection of onsite use, Bhunia said. [Link](#)

**Pulse of The People: Protect agriculture (Troy Record 12/14).** The Dec. 6 news article about the growing number of Farm Bureau membership, their annual meeting in Albany County, and some of the issues to improve agricultural economics was encouraging to read. Most people know for the need to improve agricultural economics with the assistance of the federal, state and local governments to assist farmers who risk their investment of money and labor in a climate of flooding and drought. I think the county Agriculture and Farmland Preservation Plan needs to be changed, if necessary, and fulfilled to assist the farmers’ efforts. The federal National Institute of Food and Agriculture are offering two grant programs to put into

agriculture economics and rural communities. The two “Foundational Program” initiatives offer \$12 million nationwide with an application due date of February 2013 and \$136 with an application due date of May 2013. [Link](#)

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